

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 3, 12, 17 and 18 were canceled with a previous amendment, claims 2, 4-11, 13-16, 20-24 are unchanged, and claim 19 is hereby amended.

The Examiner has objected to claim 19 as being unclear. Claim 19 has been amended to include the word “being”, as suggested by the Examiner. Withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

The Examiner has rejected claims 2, 4-11, 19, 20 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Lekeux et al. in view of Tamura et al. and Kokubu et al.

The Examiner has rejected claims 13-16 and 21-23 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Tamura et al. in view of Lekeux et al. and Kokubu et al.

Reconsideration of the prior art rejections is respectfully requested.

As admitted by the Examiner in the Office Action, Lekeux et al. and Tamura et al., either alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest a common opening with radial and axial opening directions, the opening being substantially uninterrupted between the radial and axial opening directions, as required in claim 19. Lekeux et al. and Tamura et al., either alone or in combination, further do not teach or suggest, a common opening with radial and axial opening directions, including no structural hindrance between the radial and axial opening directions, as required by claim 21. Lekeux et al. and Tamura et al., either alone or in combination, do not teach or suggest a common opening with radial and axial opening directions, the common opening extending substantially uninterrupted between the radial and axial opening directions, as required by claim 24.

Kokubu et al. JP02004166481A is not a proper reference because its publication date (June 10, 2004) is after the German priority date of this application, that date being April 17, 2003. A certified English translation of the German priority document was submitted on June 16, 2008 to

perfect the foreign priority claim. Accordingly, removal of Kokubu et al. JP02004166481A as a reference is respectfully requested.

Accordingly, claims 1, 2, 4-11, 13-16 and 19-24 are allowable over the prior art of record.

In view of the foregoing, removal of Kokubu as prior art and allowance of claims 1, 2, 4-11, 13-16 and 19-24 are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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